DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 776 SP 037 779

AUTHOR	Dagenais, Raymond J.
TITLE	Mentoring Program Standards. Mentoring.
INSTITUTION	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1996-12-00
NOTE	9p.; "Mentoring" is a publication series of the Mentoring and Leadership Resource Network (MLRN) of the ASCD. Article based on paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Staff Development Council (Nashville, TN, December 6-10, 1997).
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PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; College School Cooperation; Collegiality; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Mentors; Partnerships in Education; Secondary School Teachers; Standards
IDENTIFIERS	Canada; United States

ABSTRACT

This article uses information about successfully operated mentoring programs to formulate a set of mentoring program standards. During 1995, a study gathered information about 14 mentoring programs that were successfully serving the needs of educators. Surveys of individuals who were involved in mentoring programs across the U.S. and Canada and were members of the National Staff Development Council Mentoring Applications Network or the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Mentoring Leadership and Resource Network examined critical aspects of their programs. Analysis of the survey results found that no two programs were identical. The results helped to determine five standards that addressed the critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs: (1) mentoring programs should be designed with a clear vision of program scope in mind; (2) mentoring incentives appropriate to the circumstances should be used; (3) mentors should be prepared for the mentoring experience; (4) strategies for mentor selection and matching should be designed and implemented; and (5) information regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring experience should be collected, analyzed, and evaluated. (SM)

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ED 419 776

MLRN

MENTOR *ings*

December, 1996

A publication of the Mentoring and Leadership Resource Network of ASCD

Mentoring Program Standards

by Raymond J. Dagenais

The Challenge

As we have come to understand more about teaching and learning in recent years, the responsibility of engaging would-be and practicing educators in the process of incorporating these ideas into their work has assumed renewed importance. One time-tested approach to this challenge is mentoring. However, "mentoring" means different things to different people. The information presented in this article was collected through survey responses provided by mentoring program leaders. It was analyzed to identify critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs. Mentoring Program Standards were formulated using these critical dimensions as a foundation.

Background Research

During the fall of 1995 a project was undertaken to gather information about mentoring programs that were deemed to successfully serve the needs of educators. A "successful program" was defined to be a program that had enjoyed some longevity or the prospect of longevity based upon new program results. A survey instrument was sent to individuals who were involved in mentoring programs and were members of the National Staff Development Council Mentoring Applications Network or the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Mentoring Leadership and Resource Network. The survey instrument was designed to collect information about the critical aspects of their programs.

Information about fourteen mentoring programs from across the United States and Canada was received (See acknowledgments). Common elements of the programs helped to identify five critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs. In addition, the variety of approaches that was described helped to define a spectrum of possibilities in each of the five dimensions.

Mentoring Program Dimensions

As "our teachers" of the next generation of professional educators, mentors are expected to transmit those unwritten principles and practicalities of the educational culture to those who have taken on the challenge of helping our children learn. The following quotes express the perceived outcomes of some mentoring experiences. "My second year residents have become self-reliant, confident teachers" - Mentor, Teachers for Chicago Program, Chicago, Illinois. "From the very beginning of the program, the new staff members were made to feel that they were a part of it. The new staff members were very open-minded and willing to take risks. One of the most amazing things about the mentor program was the high comfort level that we quickly developed with each other"- Mentor, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) Summer 'AD'Ventures Mentor Program, Aurora, Illinois.

These mentors have in some way been "prepared" to orchestrate the successes they described. How did these mentors come to know what needed to occur? The central role that mentors play in the relationship has brought increased attention to the ways that these individuals are prepared for the experience. Information supplied by the survey respondents identified mentor training as one of the critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs. While mentor training may be a necessary dimension of a successful program, survey data imply it is not a sufficient condition for program success. Along with mentor training, four other areas were identified.

Dimensions of Successful Mentoring Programs

1. Program Scope
2. Mentoring Incentives
3. Mentor Training
4. Mentor Selection and Matching
5. Assessment and Evaluation of the Mentoring Experience

These dimensions will be explored through the information provided by the survey respondents. While many of the programs that were described contain elements and approaches

SP 037 779

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common to other programs, no two programs were identical. The diversity of strategies used to address each of the five dimensions establishes a continuum for each of the dimensions. Although each program may have addressed a given dimension in ways which were particular to the local circumstances, it is important to note that each of the dimensions was attended to and in a way that links each dimension to the other dimensions for a given program.

Program Scope

Program scope refers to expectations, the size of the program and the related support that is available. The continuum describing program scope extends from small departmental or special project efforts that are supported only by the will and determination of the involved parties to large scale statewide or provincial initiatives.

One such small initiative is the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy's (IMSA) Summer 'AD'Ventures Mentor Program. This program is an interdisciplinary summer experience for middle school and early high school students. During the summer of 1992 five new staff members joined the veteran faculty in a one on one mentoring arrangement. Technical support was provided through in-house contributions. Financing for this mentoring program was provided by a portion of the tuition fees of the student program and the support of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.

The Lower Kuskokwim School District Mentor Teacher Program in Bethel, Alaska, utilizes minimal classroom visitation and observation. Most of the support provided to teachers in this district occurs through e-mail and telephone. Mentor training takes advantage of audio-seminars and satellite distance delivery. This program is a good example of the alignment of resources with expectations.

District-wide programs such as the Teachers for Chicago Program may have resources available to them that may not be accessible to school-based programs. This large district program provides regular classroom teachers as mentors to teacher mentees who are in the process of changing careers to become teachers. Each mentor works with up to four mentees. During the first two years of the program over 1700 prospective interns applied for a spot in the program. During that time 185 interns (1st year participants) and residents (2nd year participants) worked with 47 mentors. Creative resource arrangements of the district allow most of the mentors to devote their entire workday to their interns and residents.

While being a large district program, the Teachers for Chicago Program may be relatively small in scope compared to some statewide and provincial programs that require new teachers to be mentored. Such a program is Iowa's Beginning Practitioner Support System Program. The state level Director of Induction oversees provisions for mentor training, oversees the preparation of those who will provide mentor training and authorizes them as trainers. This individual provides material and technical assistance to district facilitators. The state also awards a school district a small reimbursement for each beginning teacher to help offset administrative costs of the program.

The resources available to support mentoring programs vary greatly. Governmentally mandated programs have potentially the most expansive resource bases from which to draw. Large school or district sized programs typically have a greater number of potential mentors than do smaller sized programs. An understanding of program scope, the relationship between program size with its related set of expectations and the resources that are available to support the program, was identified as an important contributor to the establishment of successful mentoring programs.

Mentoring Incentives

Why do people take on the duties of being a mentor to someone else? The second dimension of successful mentoring programs concerns the incentives that move people to mentor others. To be an effective and successful mentor a person must feel some degree of caring, commitment and responsibility. These are precisely the attributes that serve to motivate veteran teachers at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, to become mentors for staff members new to their school. These mentors, experienced teachers who know the culture of the school, consider it a professional responsibility and perform the mentoring function without compensation.

Other circumstances dictate some sort of compensation to equalize the responsibility taken on by individuals who are interested in functioning as mentors. Mentors in the Wichita Public Schools program have their own full-time teaching responsibilities but supervisors are encouraged to find ways to create release time for mentoring duties. Work sites provide mentors for new teachers as they complete their district's orientation program. Up to seven hours of release time annually may be needed for the orientation process. The mentor must agree to accept the mentoring responsibility and receive training.

Several programs use monetary stipends or release time or combinations of both to reward mentors for their dedication in furthering the professional development of individuals new to their roles in education. Cooperating teachers in the Austin Peay University Teachers Education Program in Clarksville, Tennessee, perform mentoring duties with the student teachers working with them. In return for their efforts, these cooperating teachers receive an honorarium from the university.

Taking advantage of its resources the Iowa Beginning Practitioner Support System Program provides mentors and beginning practitioners with not less than the equivalent of 5 school days of release time annually for planning, demonstration, observation and feedback, and induction workshops. Mentors also receive an annual professional stipend for each beginning practitioner that is placed with them. In addition, prospective mentors receive a small one time payment for completing mentor training.

Local circumstances determine the kind of incentives mentors require to be able to commit to the responsibilities of a mentoring relationship. While release time and monetary stipends may help to justify the work that must take place, these forms of compensation can do little to engender the qualities of caring and resolve required to engage in a worthwhile professional development experience. These are the qualities that mentors have developed as a result of living out their beliefs. These qualities carry with them an incentive that is difficult to quantify.

Mentor Training

As in the cases of the dimensions that have been previously reviewed, the Mentor training dimension exhibits a spread of approaches ranging from operational programs, with little or no training offered to potential mentors, to very sophisticated curricula that mentors are expected to assimilate and practice.

The dual level New Teacher Induction Program employed in Prospect Heights School District 23, Prospect Heights, Illinois, uses no mentor training. A small presentation is made to the mentor designates at an initial meeting. The message conveyed is that the mentors are to work closely with the new teacher as a formal partner in curriculum as well as an informal friend and confidant. Monthly seminars are offered to the mentoring pairs. The topics cover such issues as discipline, student motivation, grading and testing, creating lesson plans, parent-teacher conferencing and classroom management.

A similar approach is employed at Shore Regional High School in West Long Branch, New Jersey. Content specialist mentors undergo no special mentoring training to prepare for their roles. The staff development coordinator, who serves as an instructional support mentor to new teachers in the school, has completed mentoring experience training through the National Staff Development Council. Formal and informal meetings with mentors, protégés, supervisors and the superintendent are held quarterly. The formal meetings are collegial and low-threat in nature. The mentors address such issues as record-keeping, parental contact, the grade book, and social concerns.

Before engaging in their roles with their protégés, mentors in the Eastern Illinois University Beginning Teacher Program receive one and one half days of inservice training with the program's coordinator. This initiative is a collaborative effort between Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois, and the Mattoon Illinois Community School District. The mentoring experience training takes place in the springtime. It begins with the experienced teachers telling each other about their first year of teaching and how they survived. These stories are used to develop a list of needs of first year teachers and a list of roles for the mentors. Mentor roles that have been identified in this manner include being guides, sounding boards, confidants, listeners, friends, coaches, role models, parent figures and teachers to the new teachers. The mentoring experience training covers collegial supervision, effective teaching strategies, stress management, and where the mentors can turn for help and resources.

The Governors State University Collaborative Induction Program in University Park, Illinois, runs August training sessions comprised of one full day of training for the mentors, one half day of training for the protégés and another full day of training for both mentors and protégés. The partners also receive additional orientation in their districts. Mentor experience training includes the following topics and activities:

- Historical background on induction and a review of the program's history.
- Teacher socialization theory including stages of concern.
- Reflections on their own first year teaching experience.
- School culture and community.
- Adult learning theory with a case study activity.
- Brainstorming of activities to build the mentor/protégé relationship.

- The observation process.
- Activity where mentors develop a realistic profile of a beginning teacher.
- Mentor panel discussion.
- Video of first year teachers/panel of first year teachers.
- Calendar activity where mentors break out by district and use their own district calendars and the mentor activity sheets that are provided to plan activities and ideas to share with the protégés throughout the year.

Four after school training sessions are held for the mentors and protégés from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at a centrally located community college. The first two sessions are held before the school year holiday break and focus on continuing to build the partnership and preparation for the protégés' classroom observations and the mentors' observations of their protégés' classrooms. The final two sessions are held in February and March and cover specific instructional strategies based on a needs assessment of the protégés.

Mentors in this program accompany protégés to presentations of the protégé's choice. Examples of presentation topics have included conflict resolution, classroom management, hands-on science, and multicultural education. These sessions provide a springboard for further discussion and collegial work on the topic. An end of the year culminating ceremony, which has been planned by a committee of the participants, is held in May.

The program used to prepare mentors in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District is comprised of four days of training without the mentee and two days of training with the mentee. The four days of mentor-only training include the following topics.

Day 1.

- Mentoring processes and relationships; reflections on mentor's own first year of teaching.
- Mentor roles and responsibilities; history of mentoring.
- Definition and types of coaching.
- Establishing rapport and developing trust.
- Environmental difficulties of teaching.

Day 2.

- "Top 12" first year problems encountered by beginning teachers from the research literature.
- Active listening.
- Building collegial relationships; communicating with administrators, peers, parents and students; providing moral support.
- Establishing effective routines and procedures; environmental classroom factors.

Day 3.

- Helping new teachers stay on top of their work load.
- Long range, unit, and weekly planning models.
- Classroom management techniques and discipline models.

Day 4.

- Observation process, observation tools and coaching.

The two days of mentor/mentee training include:

Day 1.

- Needs assessments for mentors and mentees.
- Goals of the mentoring program; roles for mentors, role of mentee.
- Trust building.
- Joint planning for classroom management and discipline.
- Joint planning for the first day of school.
- Discussion of parent communications.
- Introduction to long range, unit, and weekly planning.
- Mentee-only discussion of strengths/needs/concerns.

Day 2.

- Feedback on mentor and mentee needs assessment administered on Day 1.
- Joint long range planning revisited.
- Trust building.
- Joint nuts and bolts planning in mentees building.
- Active listening.
- An overview of assessment.
- Celebrating the joys of teaching and learning.

As the examples illustrate, mentoring experience training approaches display a variety of levels of sophistication. Some successful programs employ little or no formal training methods. Other programs schedule multiple days for training both mentors and protégés. The content of training can range from requests of potential mentors to "help" newcomers, to the advanced study of teaching and learning.

Mentor Selection and Matching

The fourth dimension to be considered in this review concerns the processes by which mentors are selected and matched with educators new to their roles. The spectrum of mentor selection and matching approaches ranges from the very informal to the highly structured. For example, the Vicksburg Warren School District in Vicksburg, Mississippi, does not have a formal mentoring program. Teachers new to the district usually seek

assistance from subject area or grade level chairpersons.

The purpose of the Professional Support Program of the Wichita Public Schools Unified School District 259, in Wichita, Kansas, is to provide Peer Coaches to serve as mentors, friends, and role models to their assigned clients. All probationary teachers participate in the program as well as others who request help. Mentors are usually at the same site as the new staff members and work collaboratively with the site supervisor and the new teachers to facilitate professional growth. Teachers who are willing to serve as mentors are selected and matched by site supervisors in collaboration with the new staff members.

In an alternative matching strategy, each protégé is matched with two mentors in the Shore Regional High School Program in West Long Branch, New Jersey. One of the mentors is the Staff Development Coordinator who serves as an instructional support person. The other mentor is an experienced teacher chosen to provide content support. The content mentors need to be effective teachers themselves. Individuals selected for this role tend to be good communicators who are trustworthy. They are expected to maintain close contact with their protégés, be sounding boards and resources, and trouble shoot for potential problems.

The New Teacher Induction Program of Prospect Heights School District 23 in Prospect Heights, Illinois, is designed to develop open communication and to foster the growth of beginning teachers. There are two levels of the program. Level I is for teachers who are in their 1st or 2nd year of teaching. Mentors are matched with these teachers by the building principals. Level II is for teachers with several years of teaching experience who are new to the district. Building principals assign a veteran teacher guide to aid in the orientation of these new staff members.

Tending toward a more structured selection and matching approach, the Mentor Program of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District in University Heights, Ohio, utilizes a building-based model in which one mentor is paired with one mentee. Where possible, mentors and mentees are paired based on a match of the school, subject area or grade level. The program is governed by a Board of Review comprised of four teacher's union representatives and four district administrators. The Board of Review extends an invitation to all certified employees to apply for the Mentor Program. To become a mentor in this program a teacher must be tenured, must have a minimum of eight years of teaching service in the district, and must be recognized as an exemplary teacher. Mentors are selected by building principals, union stewards and the Board of Review.

The structure employed in the Governors State University Beginning Teacher Program in University Park, Illinois, focuses upon the criteria used for the selection of mentors. This program is a collaborative initiative of the university, the local intermediate service center and eight school districts in the area. It is governed by a Coordinating Council made up of representatives of all the educational organizations that are a part of the collaborative and also the Illinois Education Association.

In the spring of each year, a letter and application form are sent to all district teachers by the program director inviting them to apply to be a mentor. The director then has an orientation session with the district administrators. General information about induction, information regarding the administrator's role and criteria and guidelines for the mentor selection and matching processes are presented. These criteria and guidelines are:

Criteria

1. Demonstrated excellence in teaching.
2. Demonstrated excellence in working with adults.
3. Demonstrated sensitivity to the viewpoints of others.
4. Demonstrated willingness to be an active and open learner.
5. Demonstrated competence in social and public relations skills.

Guidelines

1. Assign by grade level and content area.
2. Assign by physical proximity.
3. Assign by teaching style and ideology.

Building principals in consultation with the district office select mentors and match them with new teachers according to these criteria and guidelines.

These examples illustrate the spectrum of selection and matching approaches that are being employed in mentoring programs. Some districts rely on veteran teachers to provide information and support when they are sought out by new staff members. In other programs, individuals such as building principals select mentors and assign them to new teachers. Examples of the most highly structured programs take advan-

tage of the decision making capacities of collaborative committees and published criteria and guidelines to select mentors and match them with their protégés.

There is no reason to suspect that informal mentoring experiences established through the actions of the new staff member or the potential mentor themselves are any less effective than structured mentoring experiences that are coordinated by other individuals or committees. An argument can be made that since the informal arrangement of the mentoring experience grew out of the personal initiative of one or both members of the mentoring pair, it can be expected to be more meaningful to them and, thus, more successful than mentoring arrangements established without the input of the individuals who will be involved in the relationship.

The question that remains for the informal approach relates to the comfort level of new staff members and potential mentors needed to establish such an experience by themselves. In the absence of such comfort levels or even an aggressiveness to establish a helping relationship with another individual, how many opportunities for meaningful professional growth are missed by both individuals?

Assessment and Evaluation of the Mentoring Experience

Mentoring programs take advantage of assessment and evaluation strategies to different degrees. No documented evidence of the mentor's performance is recorded in the Shore Regional High School Mentor Program. However, it is apparent that a formative evaluation of the experience takes place during the scheduled formal meetings. A similar approach is used in the Adlai E. Stevenson High School Mentor Program. Assessment is informal and formative. If mentors do not do the job, they are simply not reassigned as a mentor the following year.

The New Brunswick Department of Education Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick, Canada, uses an evaluation tool which is sent to protégés, mentors, and principals late in the school year. It assesses the positive aspects and concerns of the year's activities and the overall effect of the mentor/protégé teaming process.

Mentors and beginning teachers in the Eastern Illinois University Beginning Teacher Program in Charleston, Illinois, also complete surveys as part of the program assessment late in the school year. Both groups have evaluated their mentoring experience positively. Mentors have suggested that sessions for administrators be part of the program. Beginning teachers have indicated that the time devoted to simply sharing their ideas and concerns with others was one of the most helpful components of the program.

The success of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy's Summer 'AD'Ventures mentoring program was assessed by means of written narratives that both the new staff members and the mentors were asked to submit at the conclusion of the program. Respondents were asked to comment on three particular aspects of a successful experience. These aspects and their defining characteristics are:

Career Aspects

- Exposing the protégé to new opportunities.
- Coaching of the protégé.
- Sponsoring of the protégé.
- Protection of the protégé.
- Challenging the protégé.

Psychosocial Aspects

- Mentor acting as a role model.
- Counseling of the protégé.
- Mentor exhibiting accept-confirm behaviors.
- Befriending of the protégé.

Project (Job Skill) Aspects

- Efficient use of available time.
- Appropriate utilization of equipment.
- Intelligent use of supplies.
- Challenges associated with the difficulty of the work (Realistic Standards).
- Communication of alternative job skill strategies.
- Appropriate measures of accountability.

One of the new staff members commented, "(My mentor) was receptive to new ideas, positive in the face of many unexpected problems, and continually supportive of me and the program." Another new staff member remarked, "My opinions were valued, my teaching contributions were welcomed, and I felt that I played an important role in the total success of the program." Responses like these provide information about the success of the program in terms of structured aspects and characteristics.

The Mesa Public Schools Mentor Program in Mesa, Arizona, is reviewed on a yearly basis. It is refined, if need be, based on feedback in which mentors and mentees are requested to analyze their participation during the school year. Assessment and evaluation can play critical roles in the improvement and sustainability of a mentoring program. Regardless of the

approach employed to gather information, from unrecorded formative comments about the program to specifically designed assessment tools, such input can be used to inform decisions impacting the future the initiative. Administrators can justify the maintenance or growth of a program based upon the information generated through the assessment process, and such feedback can supply validation of the efforts of both protégés and mentors.

Standards and Benchmarks

The following standards address the critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs. They emerged through an analysis of survey information provided by mentoring program leaders. The benchmarks which are associated with each standard further define the essence of the standard.

Mentoring Program Standards

STANDARD 1.

Mentoring programs should be designed with a clear vision of program scope in mind.

- 1.a Program size is carefully defined.
- 1.b Program expectations are clearly stated.
- 1.c Available resources are secured.
- 1.d Program expectations and support are balanced.

STANDARD 2.

Mentoring incentives appropriate to the circumstances should be used.

- 2.a Intrinsic desire is the fundamental motivating factor for the mentor.
- 2.b Peer support is provided to the mentor.
- 2.c Release time is provided if appropriate to the circumstances.
- 2.d Training is provided if appropriate to the circumstances.
- 2.e Financial support is provided if appropriate to the circumstances.

STANDARD 3.

Mentors should be prepared for the mentoring experience.

- 3.a Mentors understand program expectations.
- 3.b Mentors receive adult learning theory training if appropriate to the circumstances.
- 3.c Mentors receive advanced training in pedagogical approaches if appropriate to the circumstances.
- 3.d Mentors receive advanced technical training (e.g. subject matter, technology, etc.) if appropriate to the circumstances.

STANDARD 4.

Strategies for mentor selection and matching should be designed and implemented.

- 4.a Mentors selection criteria are defined.
- 4.b An efficient and effective mentor selection process is operational.
- 4.c Formal and informal mentor/protégé matching strategies are employed as appropriate to the circumstances.

STANDARD 5.

Information regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring experience should be
collected, analyzed and evaluated.

- 5.a Assessment approaches have been designed to focus on criteria related to successful mentoring experiences.
- 5.b Rubrics are used to evaluate information that has been collected.
- 5.c Protégés, mentors and program administrators provide feedback on program effectiveness.

Summary

This article has drawn upon information about successfully operating mentoring programs in order to formulate a set of mentoring program standards. Five critical dimensions of successful mentoring programs were identified through an analysis of the survey information that was collected. These critical dimensions formed the foundation for the standards. Each standard addresses one of the critical dimensions. Survey information also revealed that each dimension represented a spectrum of approaches that successfully operating mentoring programs employ. The benchmarks associated with each standard suggest the range of possibilities for addressing the standard and serve to further define the essence of the standard.

These Mentoring Program Standards represent a guide for mentoring program design and they offer a framework against which existing programs can be evaluated. As staff developers and program administrators continue to learn more about successful mentoring programs, refinements and adjustments to these standards and benchmarks can be expected.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to the following individuals for providing information about the programs described in this article.

Karen Burke, Vicksburg Warren School District, Vicksburg, Mississippi Mary C. Clement, Eastern Illinois University Beginning Teacher Program, Charleston, Illinois

Nancy Fiandach, Mesa Public Schools Mentor/Entry Level Program, Mesa, Arizona Bette Frazier, Iowa's Beginning Practitioner Support System Program, Bettendorf, Iowa

Dan Galloway, Adlai E. Stevenson High School Mentoring Program, Lincolnshire, Illinois

Renee G. Harrison, Mentor Program of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District, University Heights, Ohio

Nora Hernandez, Lower Kuskokwim School District Mentor Teacher Program, Bethel, Alaska

Richard Lange, New Teacher Induction Program of Prospect Heights School District 23, Prospect Heights, Illinois

Harriett McQueen, Austin Peay University Teachers Education Program, Clarksville, Tennessee

Jeanne Morton, Professional Support Program of the Wichita Public Schools Unified School District 259, Wichita, Kansas

John Moscinski, Teachers for Chicago Program, Chicago, Illinois Karen Peterson, Governors State University Beginning Teacher Program, University Park, Illinois

Leonard G. Schnappauf, Shore Regional High School Mentoring Program, West Long Branch, New Jersey

Cathy Thornburn, New Brunswick Department of Education Beginning Teacher Induction Program, New Brunswick, Canada

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